“NO EXIT”

PRODUCTION NOTES

20th Century Studio’s suspense/thriller “No Exit” is the story of Darby Thorne, a young woman en route to a family emergency who is stranded by a blizzard and forced to find shelter at a highway rest area with a group of strangers. When she stumbles across an abducted girl in a van in the parking lot, it sets her on a terrifying life-or-death struggle to discover who among them is the kidnapper. Directed by Damien Power (“Killing Ground”) from a screenplay by Andrew Barrer & Gabriel Ferrari (“Ant-Man and the Wasp”) based on Taylor Adams’ 2017 novel and produced by PGA Award winner Scott Frank (“The Queen’s Gambit”), the film stars Havana Rose Liu (“Mayday”), Danny Ramirez (“The Falcon and the Winter Soldier,” “Top Gun: Maverick”), David Rysdahl (“Nine Days”), Mila Harris (“Young Dylan”) and Dennis Haysbert (“Breakthrough”).

“No Exit” will debut February 25 exclusively as a Hulu Original in the U.S. and internationally as an Original on Disney+ under the Star banner and Star+ in Latin America.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Australian director Damien Power (“Killer Ground”) wasn’t familiar with Taylor Adams’ 2017 novel No Exit, when, one weekend, his agent sent him the script based on the book. It immediately drew him in, and that same day, Power read the novel, and was determined to direct the film.

“I knew what to do with it,” he recalls. “’No Exit’ has an incredibly tight plot. It’s character driven. It’s contained. It’s suspenseful and intense. It has this amazing hostile setting. I thought it was the perfect thriller.”

Power drew on various influences in developing a visual approach to the film, including Alfred Hitchcock, in terms of the master’s construction of suspense, as well as recent films like “Green Room” and “Prisoners,” which take the high concept thriller genre and give it a sense of realism.

“I also took inspiration from thrillers set in the snow,” Power continues, “like ‘Fargo’ or ‘A Simple Plan,’ where the white canvas provides a stark relief against which to see this human morality play out.”

“I think thrillers require a particular intense concentration from the audience. It’s a genre that we can have a very visceral experience with, but at the same time a thriller can be about things that people care about, and characters you can relate to. You could call them ‘domestic thrillers’ as distinct from international spy mystery stories. These are stories about people whose shoes I could easily imagine stepping into.”

Given the tightly wound spring coil of a plot, and the intensity of the single location setting, casting was crucial.

Darby is a recovering addict, who we first meet in a court assigned rehab center. Still in her early twenties, Darby has already made a lifetime of bad choices, precipitated by a tumultuous upbringing. She’s estranged from her mother and her sister, and as the film opens, Darby learns that her mother has had a brain aneurysm and is in the hospital, not expected to recover. So she takes off to visit her mom, only to be stuck in a rest stop without any phone service when the roads are closed due to a blizzard.

Power sees Darby as “an unlikely hero in many respects, tough but flawed, which for me makes her much more interesting as a hero. She’s someone who the audience might not be sure is going to get out of this situation unscathed.”

Havana Rose Liu had filmed one feature film, “Mayday” and had recently filmed a recurring role in the series “The Chair,” when she auditioned for Darby.

“When I saw Havana’s audition, I knew it had to be her,” recalls Power.

Liu says, “What’s especially interesting about Darby is that the things about her that society deems as faults end up being extreme strengths in her situation. She has very specific talents that aid her journey – breaking into cars, using drugs as a utility in a moment of need, her resilience in experiences with pain and with being alone, and her ability to withstand violence. She’s never encountered a locked door that she doesn’t want to open or push through, so there is this sense of determination and spirit that I think audiences will really empathize with.”

“The audience experiences with her a very intense pivotal moment in her life,” Liu continues, “so who Darby is in the beginning of the film is entirely different to who she is at the end. Still the same backbone, still the same resilience and sass, but her perspective on the world and her humanity has shifted acutely throughout the course of the film.”

There are four other people inside the visitors center at the rest stop. One of them is a young man asleep on a bench, Ash. When he wakes up, Darby discovers that he is not only good-looking, but seemingly helpful and intelligent.

Portraying Ash is Danny Ramirez, recently seen in Marvel's "The Falcon and the Winter Soldier." Describing his character, Ramirez says, "Ash stays a step ahead of everyone. He is always trying to figure out the power dynamics in a room. I found that fascinating, and I was intrigued by what makes someone want to establish that as their entry point to any situation."

Also in the visitors center is another young man wearing headphones, playing with matches – with which he's forming runes. Shy and withdrawn, this is Lars, who's played by David Rysdahl ("Nine Days"). Says Rysdahl, "A lot of what the movie is about is how we all tell stories to save ourselves. Lars is living in a fantasy, and that's his tragic flaw. The movie really makes each character face their own darkness and come to terms with the stories they've been telling themselves."

Seated at a table in the room is a middle-aged couple, Ed and Sandi. Ed is a US Marines veteran, who met Sandi, then a nurse, while being treated in a Veteran's Administration Hospital. Trapped during a snowstorm, Ed seems like the ideal person to rely on. A strong and silent type, Ed is portrayed by veteran actor Dennis Haysbert, who most recently starred as "God" on the series "Lucifer."

When we meet her, Sandi seems quiet and reserved, her head stuck in a Sodoku puzzle. She and Ed were headed for Ed's favorite city, Reno, a surprise getaway from Sandi.

Director Power had been taken with Dale Dickey's work ever since he saw her in "Winter's Bone", and she was his first and only choice to play Sandi.

Recalls Dickey, "After talking with Damien, I really wanted to do the film as his approach to doing a thriller really intrigued me. For him, the violence, the blood, was not the focus. The focus is the psychological story of these people trapped in this place and dealing with the consequences of the choices they've made – and unraveling that intrigued me a great deal."

Dickey was thankful for working opposite Haysbert as her onscreen husband, especially during the emotionally devastating scenes they share in the last act of the film.

"Dennis was a very grounding presence on set. He kept us on track and made us laugh," she says. "I think we made a pretty good team."

Says Haysbert, "Dale is one of the best actresses I've ever worked with.

For the role of Jay, a sick young girl who has been kidnapped and bundled into a van, Power chose 10-year-old Mila Harris.

The director says, “She is so talented, it’s scary. She can turn terror on and off like a tap. She’d be laughing and poking out her tongue at the camera, then we’d roll and suddenly she’s crying and screaming. She was so convincing that at times it was a struggle to keep the camera rolling. It was so distressing.”

Although the film is set in California’s Sierra Nevada Mountains, because of Covid-19, the decision was made to film “No Exit” in New Zealand. After the cast quarantined, Power and the producers held two weeks of rehearsals.

Dickey says, “You don’t often get a rehearsal process, so it was brilliant to be able to talk about the script and the relationships.”

Production Designer Gary Mackay and his team created a completely practical visitor center set inside the exterior location – the car park and the edges of the surrounding woods – in the Penrose Studio in Auckland.

A significant benefit of filming in the studio, in one location, was being able to film in sequence – a rarity for film production.

Says Ramirez, “Shooting chronologically was a blessing because it made the characters deeper. We could all build up points of reference and it gave me the freedom to double down and drive and drive, drive, drive.”

Haysbert adds, “The way ‘No Exit’ was shot allowed us all to ask the question ‘What's next, okay what happens next? What happens next?’ I love that build, and you can only get that in a play or when you're shooting a film in sequence. It was an absolutely brilliant feeling.”

The challenge of keeping the audience interested and entertained within a single location film was offset in part by the dynamism of the sequences.

“It starts with a mystery - who put the kid in the van,” explains Power, “and the tension of Darby trying to figure that out like a detective, followed by a cat and mouse game as the motives of various players are revealed. It has a siege, it has a chase, it has crazy mayhem at the end. So, within the one setting, we were able to unleash this incredible variety of action.”

ABOUT THE CAST

Raised in Brooklyn, New York, **HAVANA ROSE LIU (Darby)** graduated from NYU Gallatin where she studied the intersection between art, activism and wellness.

Immediately post-graduation she booked a breakout role in Karen Cinorre's feature "Mayday" opposite Grace Van Patten, Mia Goth, Soko, Theodore Pellerin and Juliette Lewis. "Mayday" premiered at Sundance 2021.

She can currently be seen in Josephine Decker's A24/Apple film "The Sky Is Everywhere" and in the Netflix series "The Chair," opposite Sandra Oh.

Beyond acting, Havana is a multimedia visual and performance artist, entrepreneur and model. She is also the founder of Tiny Breast, a line of handmade pendants made in emotional, political and financial support of intersectional feminism.

Havana was featured on the cover of the September 2020 issue of Italian Vogue and in Vogue Japan's June 2021 issue.

A dynamic and versatile performer, **DANNY RAMIREZ (Ash)** is quickly emerging as one of the entertainment industry's breakout discoveries.

Ramirez is fresh off the success of the Disney+ Marvel series, "The Falcon & The Winter Soldier," where he co-starred opposite Anthony Mackie, playing Marvel character Joaquin Torres. The actor will next appear opposite Tom Cruise in Paramount's highly anticipated "Top Gun: Maverick," which is due out in May 2022. He will also soon be seen on Netflix's dual-timeline drama "Plus/Minus" opposite Lili Reinhart.

Ramirez recently completed production on "Chestnut," a queer love triangle drama from Jac Cron, where he will star opposite Natalia Dyer and Rachel Keller.

Next up, Ramirez will be producing and starring in the Zone One Productions genre/thriller film, "To Die Sane," co-written by Moises Zamora and Carlos Cisco. Bianca Quesada and Zamora will also produce alongside Ramirez.

Ramirez' film credits have sent waves through the festival circuit with Sam Levinson's "Assassination Nation" (2018 Sundance Film Festival), Katherine O'Brien's "Lost Transmissions" (2019 Tribeca Film Festival) and David Raboy's "The Giant" (2019 Toronto International Film Festival.)

His other film credits include Sonja O'Hara's "Root Letter" and Talia Lugacy's "This Is Not a War Story." His television credits include Netflix's "On My Block" and FOX's "The Gifted." Born in Chicago and raised in Miami, Ramirez moved to New York to attend NYU Poly where he played soccer before attending NYU's Tisch School of the Arts from which he graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Theatre.

DAVID RYSDAHL (Lars) was most recently seen opposite Winston Duke, Zazie Beetz, Benedict Wong and Bill Skarsgard in Edson Oda's acclaimed film "Nine Days," which premiered at Sundance 2020. Prior to that, he portrayed Jeff Sharlet in the Netflix docuseries "The Family," Rysdahl also completed work in a lead role in Patrick Letterii's independent feature film "The Land of Owls" and starred in Cathy Yan's dark comedy, "Dead Pigs," opposite Mason Lee and Zazie Beet, which premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival. He also guest starred on CBS's "Bull" and can be seen in the independent feature "Revival."

Aside from his work as an actor, Rysdahl is actively developing projects with his producing and life partner Zazie Beetz under their production banner Sleepy Poppy. Beetz and Rysdahl say Sleepy Poppy is "a place where humans can feel like they are playing in a sand box of creativity. A place where story tellers can embrace their true, authentic selves while exploring story with joy, passion, wonder, and humility."

Rysdahl grew up in Minnesota and now resides in New York.

A veteran of film, television and the theatre, **DALE DICKEY (Sandi)** she has over 60 film credits - most notably Debra Granik's acclaimed "Winter's Bone," winning the Film Independent Spirit Award for Supporting Actress and sharing the Gotham Award for Best Ensemble for her role as Merab. She stars in the indie "A Love Song," which recently premiered to critical acclaim at Sundance. Other films include "Flag Day," "Palm Springs," "Leave No Trace," "Hell or Hight Water," "Iron Man 3," "Changeling," "Domino" and "The Pledge." With over 50 television guest starring roles, Dickey is best known for her numerous recurring roles on projects such as "Them," "Unbelievable," "True Blood," "Breaking Bad," "Justified," "Claws," "Vice Principals" and "My Name Is Earl." Upcoming: "A League of Their Own" for Amazon. Her theatre career spans from Broadway to Off, numerous regional productions, as well as many L.A. stages including The Geffen.

MILA HARRIS (Jay) was born in Atlanta, GA in 2010 and began acting and modeling at the age 5. Like many young actors, Harris started her career in theatre where she played the lead in performances at the Alliance Theater for productions "The Jungle Book" and "99 Acre Wood." She was print modeling by the age of 7 and was named one of the most beautiful children in

Atlanta Parent Magazine. Harris was in national commercials including work for Arby's and Loews Hotel, among other national brands.

Harris made her TV debut in the Netflix series "Raising Dion," immediately followed by the short film "Authentics," directed by Daniel Stine. Harris portrayed the young lead in director Quincy Ledbetter's award-winning film "Alieu the Dreamer," featured on BET by Paramount Players. In 2019, she booked a guest star role on the hit Nickelodeon series "Young Dylan" where she played a sassy, fashionista named Abigail, directed by Tyler Perry. In 2021, Harris filmed a supporting role in the film "The Hill," starring Dennis Quaid. Harris also has supporting roles in the upcoming films "King Saud," directed by Mark Toma, and "The Heart of the Manor," directed by Linden Ashby.

Harris spends her free time rollerblading, swimming, and playing with her dog. Given her mother's Japanese heritage, Harris likes to experience other cultures and has travelled to 18 countries around the world including her favorite cities Paris, Dubai and London. Harris says, "Empathy is my superpower and I use it through acting to influence positive energy in the world."

DENNIS HAYSBERT (Ed) captured the attention of audiences and critics alike with his groundbreaking role as President David Palmer on FOX's hit series "24," for which he received his first Golden Globe® nomination, and two Screen Actor Guild nominations. He starred in the CBS series "The Unit," which continues to be an iconic and culturally relevant television show. Haysbert was most recently seen in the fifth season of Netflix's "Lucifer."

His film projects include Paramount's "Playing with Fire," FOX's "Breakthrough," Columbia Pictures "The Dark Tower," Netflix's romantic comedy "Naked", Warner Bros.' comedy "Fist Fight," *Magnolia Pictures' "Experimenter," Seth MacFarlane's "Ted" sequel, "Ted 2," Sony's Crackle, "Dead Rising: Watchtower," Paramount Picture's "Men Women & Children," Lionsgate's "Dear White People," as well as, Screen Gems,' romantic comedy "Think Like a Man Too," sequel to the 2012 film "Think Like a Man." Additional films include Dimension Film's "Sin City: A Dame to Kill For," Millennium Entertainment's "Life of a King," Universal Pictures International's "Welcome to the Jungle," 20th Century Fox's animated film "Mr. Peabody & Sherman," Walt Disney's "Wreck-it Ralph," Indomina's "LUV," DreamWorks' "Kung Fu Panda 2," The Weinstein Company's "The Details," Universal's "Breach" and "Jarhead." Additional films include: New Line Cinema's "Love and Basketball," Warner Bros., "Absolute Power," Orion Production's "Love Field," Paramount's "Major League", Warner Bros., "Heat," Columbia

Pictures' "Random Hearts," Trimark Picture's "What's Cooking," Fox's "Waiting to Exhale," Columbia Pictures and Sony Production's "The Thirteenth Floor," Orion Picture's "Navy Seals," Alfa Omega's "Suture," and Dream Works' "Sinbad Legend of the Seven Seas." Haysbert has also appeared on the small screen in the critically acclaimed CBS production "Now and Again" and Syfy's "Incorporated".

In 2015 Haysbert was given the honor of becoming the newest voice of NBC News' "Meet the Press."

Born and raised in Northern California, Haysbert began acting with a television role on an episode of the Emmy®-winning "Lou Grant."

He is active in the fight against AIDS and in 2000 was spokesperson for the Harlem Health Expo "Break the Silence" as well as The Western Center on Law and Poverty. He has done many USO tours, most recently in Italy, Germany, Southwest Asia, Afghanistan, and aboard a Naval Ship.

Haysbert lives in Los Angeles.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

DAMIEN POWER (Director) grew up in Launceston, Tasmania: pop: 60,000; cinema: 1. As a teenager he joined the local film society with his grandfather, forging a lifelong love of movies. After completing an Arts/Law degree in Hobart, he moved to Sydney to join the Classification Board (the Australian equivalent of the US MPAA ratings board or the UK's BBFC). Soon after Power arrived in Sydney he started making short films, and went on to study an MA in Directing at the Australian Film Television & Radio School (AFTRS).

Power's first feature, the survival thriller "Killing Ground," had its international premiere at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival in the iconic Midnight Section where it played to rave reviews: 'a straight-up, stripped-down suspenser' (Variety); 'knife-edge performances and a terrifying premise executed with airtight verisimilitude… beautifully made and utterly disturbing' (The Guardian); 'an impressive, not-for-the-fainthearted feature debut that clever plays with narrative chronology and your central nervous system.' (Rolling Stone)

Power has also written and directed award-winning shorts that have screened at festivals worldwide including Venice, Busan, New York Film Festival, Sydney and MIFF, as well as online in YouTube/Scott Free's inaugural Your Film Festival.

ANDREW BARRER & GABRIEL FERRARI wrote the **Screenplay** for the 2021 film “Die in a Gunfight,” on which they also served as executive producers. Additionally, they were credited writers, along with others, on 2018’s “Ant-Man and the Wasp.”

SCOTT FRANK’s (Producer) screenplays include “Little Man Tate,” “Dead Again,” “Malice,” “Heaven’s Prisoners,” “Get Shorty,” “Out of Sight,” “Minority Report,” “The Interpreter,” “The Lookout” (also directed), “Marley & Me,” “The Wolverine,” “Walk Among the Tombstones” (also directed), “Logan,” the Netflix limited series “Godless” (also directed) and “The Queen’s Gambit” (also directed). Mr. Frank’s first novel, Shaker, was published by Knopf in 2015.

“Out of Sight” and “Logan” were both nominated for Academy Awards® for Best Adapted Screenplay. “Out of Sight” won the Writers Guild of America Award for Best Adapted Screenplay, the Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America as well as Best Screenplay awards from the National Society of Film Critics and the Boston Society of Film Critics.

“Logan” was also nominated for a Writers Guild Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. Get Shorty was nominated for both a Golden Globe® and a Writers Guild Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. His directorial debut “The Lookout” won the Independent Spirit award for Best First Feature.

“Godless” was nominated for 12 Emmy® awards, including for writing, directing and Best Limited Series, as well as nominations from the Director’s and Writer’s Guilds.

“The Queen’s Gambit” won 11 Emmy® Awards, including Best Director and Best Limited Series. It won the Golden Globe® for Best Limited Series as well as winning awards in the Limited Series category from the Writer’s, Producer’s and Director’s Guilds, The Critic’s Choice Awards and the USC Scriptor Award for Best Adaptation. It was also named one of the AFI’s Top Ten Shows for 2020.

Mr. Frank is currently adapting Mary Doria Russell’s novel The Sparrow for F/X as a limited series for Johan Renck to direct, preparing Monsieur Spade, a series he co-created with Tom Fontana and will direct for AMC in 2022, and adapting, with Megan Abbott, the Nabokov novel Laughter in the Dark as a feature film.